



Relevance of Social Work Practice in Child Sexual Abuse in Uselu Community, Edo State, Nigeria

OSAMUYI AGHASOMWAN BELLO, HELEN EHI. EWEKA
University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

Abstract. Child sexual abuse (CSA) remains a critical social issue with profound psychological and social consequences. Addressing this challenge requires effective social work interventions tailored to community-specific needs. This study evaluates the relevance of social work practice in addressing CSA in Uselu Community, Edo State, Nigeria. The objectives were to explore the prevalence and underlying factors of CSA and assess the effectiveness of social work intervention practices. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, using a structured questionnaire to collect data from 384 respondents, with a 95.6% response rate. Findings revealed significant awareness of CSA, with 66.8% acknowledging its prevalence, though 33.2% remained unaware, highlighting gaps in awareness efforts. The home was identified as the most common site of abuse (49.0%), followed by schools (25.8%) and religious institutions (12.8%). Poverty (44.4%) and lack of parental supervision (35.9%) emerged as primary contributing factors. Social work interventions practices were rated as effective, with 48.5% of respondents considering counseling services very effective and 62% acknowledging effective collaboration with law enforcement. However, gaps exist in resource adequacy and outreach initiatives. The study recommends enhanced counseling services, stronger collaboration with law enforcement, increased resource allocation, and expanded community education programs to effectively combat CSA.

Keywords: Child sexual abuse, social work practice, prevalence, intervention effectiveness, community awareness.

1. Introduction

Waking up to the haunting cry of a mother's anguish, echoing through the neighbourhood, signals that something is terribly wrong. Her uncontrollable wails pierce the morning air as she utters heart-

wrenching words: "who could have done this to you, my innocent child, before you have even had a chance to grow up?..... Who can I turn to for help, to ease this unbearable pain?" As the cock crows, signaling dawn's arrival, the mother's desperate cries hang in the air, a poignant plea for support and justice.

Child sexual abuse (CSA) represents a profound violation of a child's fundamental human rights and has severe physical, psychological, and social consequences. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), CSA encompasses situations where a child is "unable to give consent, under compulsion, fear or any other circumstances, not prepared physically, mentally or emotionally for sexual activities," and includes acts like child trafficking, prostitution, pornography, and other illegal activities that violate societal moral values (WHO, 2021). CSA is not a new phenomenon; it has been prevalent globally for centuries and continues to affect children within the supposed safety of their families and communities. In Nigeria, instances of child sexual abuse have been reported to involve close relatives and family members as perpetrators (Bello & Osunde, 2022). Unfortunately, due to fear, stigma, and the traumatic impact on the child's psyche, many instances of CSA remain unreported, further complicating efforts to address this pervasive issue (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2020). Globally, CSA prevalence rates range from 12.7% to 18% for girls and 7.8% for boys (Stoltenborgh et al., 2015). In specific countries, the rates vary: 5% in the United States (Finkelhor et al., 2015), 1% to 64.3% for girls and up to 43.9% for boys in Japan (Tanaka et al., 2017), 1.5% to 32.5% in Iran (Danaeifar et al., 2022), 22.1% for girls and 9.2% for boys in Spain (Pineda et al., 2023), and 11% to 36% for girls and 3% to 23% for boys in Nordic countries (Kloppen et al., 2016).

The increasing rate of child sexual abuse across various societies has drawn significant concern from governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international bodies. Despite legal frameworks aimed at curbing these heinous acts, such as Nigeria's 2015 law imposing life imprisonment for those who commit rape against children under 11 years of age, the prevalence of CSA remains disturbingly high (Halim, 2016). This reflects the need for a more comprehensive approach that goes beyond legal sanctions to address the underlying social, cultural, and psychological factors that perpetuate these crimes. Sexual abuse not only leads to immediate physical harm but also results in long-term emotional and psychological trauma, often causing irreversible damage to a child's development, well-being, and overall personality (Jones et al., 2019).

The role of social work becomes critical in this context, especially in the domains of disclosure and reporting. Social workers are uniquely positioned to support victims and their families by providing safe spaces for children to disclose their experiences without fear of judgment or further harm. Their role extends to advocacy, awareness creation, and policy reform, aiming to break the silence that surrounds CSA. The silence is often maintained by cultural taboos, fear of stigma, and inadequate support systems that discourage children and their guardians from reporting such crimes (Finkelhor, 2018). Social workers can drive change by fostering environments where victims feel empowered to come forward and by collaborating with law enforcement, healthcare providers, and community organizations to ensure a holistic response to CSA.

The complexities surrounding child sexual abuse ranging from underreporting to societal attitudes that inadvertently protect perpetrators underscore the urgent need for social work interventions. By focusing on child welfare, social justice, and systemic change, social workers are crucial in advocating for the rights of children and developing robust support networks that prioritize the safety, recovery, and well-being of victims. In doing so, they help shift societal norms towards zero tolerance for CSA and create frameworks that promote accountability and justice (Paine & Hansen, 2021).

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a serious social issue that significantly affects vulnerable populations, particularly children in Nigeria. In Uselu Community, Edo State, the prevalence of CSA is alarming, yet the problem remains largely unreported and untreated due to social stigma, cultural taboos, and inadequate social services. Research indicates that CSA often occurs in places where children should feel safe, such as homes,

schools, and religious institutions (Bello & Osunde, 2022; Ojo & Osemeobo, 2021). Victims and their families frequently remain silent due to fear of ostracism, shame, and a lack of trust in the legal system, complicating the response to this serious crime.

In Edo State, multiple factors contribute to high rates of CSA, including poverty, inadequate parental supervision, and the erosion of traditional protective systems (Ezeh & Onyemere, 2020). The urban environment of Uselu community exacerbates these issues, marked by overcrowded living conditions and significant socioeconomic challenges. The absence of effective social work interventions has allowed CSA to persist, leaving victims traumatized with long-term consequences such as mental health disorders, poor academic performance, and difficulties in forming trusting relationships (Afolabi, 2019).

Despite laws like the Child Rights Act of 2003, enforcement remains weak due to insufficient resources allocated to child protection services (Nwoke, 2022). This highlights the critical role of social work in bridging the gap between victims and essential support services. Social workers can provide direct interventions such as counseling and advocacy, alongside community-based education and prevention programs aimed at addressing the societal silence surrounding CSA. Effective social work practice is essential for ensuring that CSA victims in Uselu Community receive the necessary care and justice.

This paper employs ecological systems theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner as its theoretical framework. This theory is particularly relevant, as it offers a holistic understanding of how various environmental systems interact to influence the occurrence and resolution of CSA (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It emphasizes that children's experiences, including those related to abuse, are shaped by their interactions with multiple systems.

Ecological Systems Theory posits that human behavior is influenced by interrelated systems: the microsystem (immediate environments like family and school), the mesosystem (connections between microsystems), the exosystem (indirect influences such as parental workplace policies), the macrosystem (societal and cultural influences), and the chronosystem (historical changes) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Each of these systems critically shapes the experiences of CSA victims, their families, and the broader community.

By exploring the prevalence and underlying factors of CSA, Ecological Systems Theory facilitates an examination of influences across multiple levels such as poverty and lack of supervision

(microsystem), community awareness (mesosystem), and socio-economic conditions (macrosystem) all contributing to CSA prevalence in Uselu Community (Ezeh & Onyemere, 2020). This theory is justified in this study as it reveals how vulnerabilities arise from the interactions among these systems, highlighting the need for comprehensive social work interventions in problems that arises in cases of child sexual abuse in the study area and in other regions in general. Social workers can strengthen the microsystem by supporting families, advocate for policy reforms in the exosystem, and promote community education to shift cultural attitudes in the macrosystem

1.2 Objective of the Study

The aim of this study is to evaluate the relevance of social work practice in child sexual abuse in Uselu Community, Edo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

explore the prevalence and underlying factors of child sexual abuse in Uselu Community, Edo State, Nigeria.

Assess the effectiveness of social work interventions in combating CSA in Uselu Community, Edo State, Nigeria.

2. Conceptualization of Child Sexual Abuse

In Nigeria, child sexual abuse is a crime outlined in several sections of Chapter 21 of the criminal code, where the age of consent is set at 18 (Bello & Osunde, 2022). According to a 2015 report by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, one in four girls in Nigeria experiences sexual violence before turning 18. Additionally, a survey conducted by Positive Action for Treatment Access revealed that more than 31.4 percent of girls reported that their first sexual experience was rape or some form of forced sex. A hospital-based review in Abuja identified 131 cases of female defilement over three years, indicating that child defilement is a significant and potentially underreported issue in Nigeria (Bello & Osunde, 2022).

Child sexual abuse (CSA) refers to any interaction between a child and an adult (or another child, usually in a position of power or control) where the child is used for sexual stimulation or satisfaction. CSA encompasses a wide range of actions, including non-contact activities (exposing a child to sexual acts, materials, or conversations) and direct physical contact, such as fondling, rape, or coercing a child to perform sexual acts (World Health Organization, 2022). The conceptualization of CSA is complex, evolving through cultural, legal, and academic discourses that define what constitutes

abuse and the role of societal norms in shaping our understanding of child protection.

From a legal perspective, CSA is defined by laws that prohibit sexual exploitation and violence against children. These laws differ across countries but generally agree that children are incapable of giving informed consent to sexual activities, making any sexual engagement with a minor inherently abusive (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 2021). The age of consent, which determines the legal boundary for sexual activity, varies globally but serves as a fundamental benchmark for identifying CSA. International conventions like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) set guidelines for protecting children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse (United Nations, 1989).

Psychological perspectives on CSA emphasize its profound impact on child development. Researchers highlight that children who experience sexual abuse are more likely to suffer from long-term emotional, psychological, and social consequences, such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and difficulty forming healthy relationships in adulthood (Pereda et al., 2009). The psychological definition of CSA also considers the power imbalance between the abuser and the child, which contributes to the child's vulnerability and inability to resist or understand the implications of the abuse.

Societal attitudes toward CSA have evolved significantly over time. Historically, CSA was often downplayed or ignored, especially within families, due to cultural taboos surrounding discussions of sexuality and child protection. However, growing awareness of the pervasive nature of CSA has led to increased advocacy for child protection policies and more rigorous academic research into the prevalence, causes, and consequences of CSA (Finkelhor, 2019). Social work and child protection services play a crucial role in both preventing CSA and providing support to survivors through therapeutic interventions and legal advocacy.

3. Forms of Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse (CSA) refers to any form of sexual activity involving a child and an adult or older individual, where the child cannot legally or emotionally consent. CSA has devastating psychological, emotional, and physical consequences on victims, and it occurs in various forms. One common form of child sexual abuse is contact abuse, which involves physical interactions between the abuser and the child. These may include inappropriate touching, fondling, kissing, or engaging in penetrative acts. Such abuse often

occurs in private settings, making it difficult for victims to seek immediate help (Greenbaum, 2020). Perpetrators may be individuals within the child's trusted circle, such as family members, teachers, or caregivers, which complicates disclosure and reporting (Mathews et al., 2019). Put differently, Bello and Osunde (2022), asserts that child sexual abuse often occurs in environments typically seen as safe, such as homes and schools, with perpetrators frequently being individuals known and trusted by the child or holding authority over them. He emphasized that female children are more likely to be sexually abused by familiar individuals, often an adult or older child who is a family member, family friend, or in a position of trust or authority. Furthermore, he pointed out that children living in low-income areas, regions affected by insecurity or armed conflict, or those separated from their families are especially vulnerable. Addressing sexual abuse, exploitation, and all forms of gender-based violence is deemed essential for economic and social progress (Bello & Osunde, 2022).

Another form of CSA is non-contact abuse, which does not involve physical interaction but is equally harmful. This may include exposing a child to pornography, engaging in indecent exposure, or using a child to produce sexual content, such as videos or photographs. With the rise of technology, online grooming has become a prevalent form of non-contact abuse. Offenders exploit digital platforms to build relationships with children, manipulating them into sharing explicit content or meeting in person for sexual purposes (Bourgouin, 2021).

Exploitation and child prostitution represent another grave form of CSA. This occurs when a child is forced or manipulated into sexual acts for money, goods, or other forms of benefit, often facilitated by a third party. Child trafficking for sexual exploitation is a major global concern, particularly in vulnerable communities where children are more susceptible to coercion due to poverty or lack of protection (Rafferty, 2018).

Additionally, child sexual abuse within institutions is a form that has garnered attention, particularly in religious, educational, and care institutions. Here, perpetrators may use their position of authority to abuse children, often over extended periods, as such environments can shield abusers from scrutiny (McAlinden, 2016). The abuse often goes unreported due to the power dynamics, fear, and shame experienced by victims.

4. Social Work's Role in Ameliorating Child Sexual Abuse

In Nigeria, close relatives and family members have been identified as perpetrators of child sexual abuse. The alarming prevalence of sexual violations, such as pedophilia, significantly affects the mental, physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of these girls, often making it difficult for them to develop a sense of self-love, let alone affection for their country. This situation is exacerbated when perpetrators go unpunished due to the "twisted" and lenient nature of the laws regarding the sexual abuse of female children (Bello & Osunde, 2022). Child sexual abuse (CSA) remains one of the most pressing and disturbing issues facing children worldwide. It affects the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of children and disrupts their development, often leading to long-term trauma. Social workers play a crucial role in addressing CSA through intervention, advocacy, and prevention. Their involvement is essential to ensure that victims receive appropriate care, protection, and justice, while also working to prevent the occurrence of abuse through community engagement and education.

One of the key roles of social workers in ameliorating child sexual abuse is through early intervention. Social workers are often the first professionals to identify signs of abuse, which may include behavioral changes, emotional withdrawal, or physical symptoms. By assessing the child's environment and conducting thorough investigations, they can determine if a child is at risk and take necessary steps to protect the child (Finkelhor, 2020). This may involve working with law enforcement, healthcare providers, and the judicial system to ensure the child's safety.

Counseling and therapeutic interventions form a significant part of social workers' role in assisting victims of CSA. Victims often suffer from long-term psychological effects, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and low self-esteem (Salter et al., 2021). Social workers provide trauma-informed counseling, helping children process their experiences in a safe and supportive environment. These therapeutic interventions are vital for the child's healing process and future well-being.

Furthermore, social workers advocate for child protection laws and policies that aim to prevent CSA and provide support to survivors. By collaborating with policymakers and community organizations, they push for stronger regulations, effective reporting systems, and more comprehensive support structures for victims (McElvaney, 2019). Social workers are also instrumental in promoting

education and awareness programs aimed at preventing child sexual abuse. These programs teach children about body autonomy, consent, and how to report inappropriate behavior, while also educating parents and guardians on recognizing potential signs of abuse (Lefevor et al., 2021). In addition to these direct interventions, social workers engage in multi-disciplinary collaboration to ensure a holistic approach to dealing with CSA. This often involves coordination with law enforcement, healthcare providers, educational institutions, and legal professionals to provide comprehensive care and protection for the victim.

5. Methodology

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design, as it allowed for the collection of data at a single point in time. The study utilized quantitative data collection techniques, with the questionnaire serving as the sole instrument for data collection. The sample size for questionnaire administration was determined based on the population size of 142,934 persons for the Uselu settlement, as estimated by Magnus and Esegbe (2012) from the 2006 National Population Commission report. The 2006 census figure was projected to the year 2024 using the population projection formula, which is stated as follows:

$$\text{Population Projection} = P_0 e^{rt}$$

Where:

P_0 = Initial population at a given time (142,934 persons); $e = 2.71828$ (Euler’s constant);

r = Population growth rate (3.31%); t = Time period of population growth (18 years)

Thus, the projected population for 2024 was calculated as:

$$142,934 \times 2.71828^{(3.31 \times 18)} = 231,489 \text{ persons}$$

Using the projected population of 231,489 persons, a sample size of 384 persons was determined following the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula for sample size determination. The purposive sampling technique was employed to target social workers in the Ministry of Social Welfare Development, located at the Egor Local Government Secretariat within the study area. Additionally, community leaders, parents, and other residents who had lived in the study area for at least one year and possessed adequate knowledge of child sexual abuse (CSA) were included in the study.

The questionnaire was content-validated by experts in the field of social sciences and contained only closed-ended questions. Data were collected through a one-time survey method, facilitated by three research assistants. The collected data were analyzed descriptively using SPSS (version 23.0), with the results presented in frequency counts, percentages, and tables.

6. Data Analysis, Presentation of Results and Discussion of Findings

Out of the 384 questionnaires distributed, 17 were incompletely filled; thus, only 367 questionnaires were utilized for this study. This resulted in a response rate of 95.6%, which is considered adequate for a study of this nature.

Socio-Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristic of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=367)	Percentage (%)
Age	18 - 35 years	206	56.3%
	36 - 50 years	101	27.4%
	51 years and above	60	16.3%
Ethnicity	Edo	228	62.1%
	Yoruba	67	18.4%
	Igbo	44	12.1%
	Other	28	7.4%
Marital Status	Married	200	54.5%
	Single	116	31.7%
	Divorced/Widowed	39	10.6%
	Separated	12	3.2%
Educational Qualification	Primary Education	53	14.5%
	Secondary Education	177	48.2%
	Tertiary Education	125	34.1%
	No Formal Education	12	3.2%
Total		367	100%

Source: Field work, 2025

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents reveal diverse groups within the Uselu community. In terms of age, the majority of respondents (56.3%) were between 18 and 35 years old, followed by 27.4% in the 36 to 50 years range, and 16.3% were aged 51 years and above.

Ethnically, most respondents (62.1%) identified as Edo, followed by Yoruba (18.4%), Igbo (12.1%), and others (7.4%). This indicates a predominance of the Edo ethnic group, but with notable diversity, reflecting a blend of local and migrant populations.

In terms of marital status, a significant portion of respondents (54.5%) were married, while 31.7% were single. A smaller proportion (10.6%) were divorced or widowed, and 3.2% were separated. This suggests a community with strong family structures, but also some challenges related to marital breakdowns.

Educationally, 48.2% of respondents had secondary education, 34.1% had tertiary education, and 14.5% had primary education. A small percentage (3.2%) had no formal education. This suggests that a substantial proportion of the population has at least basic education, though there is still a need for further educational opportunities in the community.

Objective One: To explore the prevalence and underlying factors of child sexual abuse in Uselu Community, Edo State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Distribution of responses on prevalence and factors of CSA

Question	Response Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Have you ever been aware of child sexual abuse cases in Uselu Community?	Yes	245	66.8%
	No	122	33.2%
What is the most common location for CSA in Uselu Community?	Home	180	49.0%
	School	95	25.8%
	Religious institutions	47	12.8%
	Other	45	12.4%
What are the main contributing factors to CSA in Uselu Community?	Poverty	163	44.4%
	Lack of parental supervision	132	35.9%
	Cultural taboos	49	13.3%
	Other	23	6.4%
Total		367	100%

Source: Field work, 2025

The data reveals that a majority of respondents (66.8%) were aware of child sexual abuse (CSA) cases in Uselu Community, indicating a considerable level of awareness within the community. However, the 33.2% who were unaware suggest that awareness efforts may not have reached all segments of the population, highlighting the need for targeted awareness campaigns and education (Ojo & Osemeobo, 2021). Regarding the locations where CSA most commonly occurs, the home was identified by 49.0% of respondents as the primary setting, emphasizing the importance of strengthening household-based preventive measures and parental vigilance. Schools (25.8%) and religious institutions (12.8%) were also reported as notable locations, indicating the necessity for enhanced child protection policies within these environments to mitigate risks (Afolabi, 2019).

The findings further indicate that poverty (44.4%) is the leading contributing factor to CSA in Uselu Community, followed by lack of parental supervision (35.9%). These results align with existing research suggesting that economic hardship and inadequate supervision increase children's vulnerability to abuse (Ezeh & Onyemere, 2020). Cultural taboos (13.3%) were also identified as a contributing factor, underscoring the influence of deeply rooted societal norms that may hinder open discussions and reporting of abuse cases.

Objective Two: To assess the effectiveness of social work interventions in addressing child sexual abuse in Uselu community, Edo State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Effectiveness of social work interventions in addressing child sexual abuse

Question	Response Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How effective are social workers in providing counseling to CSA victims?	Very effective	178	48.5%
	Effective	104	28.3%
	Neutral	21	5.7%
	Ineffective	7	1.9%
	Very ineffective	0	0.0%
How effective are social workers/social welfare officers in raising awareness about CSA in the community?	Very effective	140	38.1%
	Effective	112	30.5%
	Neutral	40	10.9%
	Ineffective	18	4.9%
	Very ineffective	0	0.0%
How well do social workers/social welfare officers collaborate with other stakeholders in managing CSA cases?	Very Well	84	22.9%
	Well	110	30.0%
	Neutral	63	17.2%
	Poorly	46	12.5%
	Very poorly	7	1.9%
Total		367	100%

Source: Source: Field work, 2025

The data presented in Table 3 highlights the effectiveness of social work interventions in addressing child sexual abuse (CSA) in Uselu Community, Edo State. Regarding the effectiveness of social workers in providing counseling to CSA victims, 48.5% of respondents rated them as very effective, with an additional 28.3% considering them effective. This reflects a generally positive view of the counseling services provided, although 5.7% of respondents remained neutral, and 1.9% considered the services ineffective. In terms of raising awareness about CSA in the community, 38.1% of respondents found social workers to be very effective, while 30.5% deemed them effective. However, 10.9% remained neutral, and 4.9% felt the awareness-raising efforts were ineffective.

Finally, when evaluating the collaboration of social workers with other stakeholders in managing CSA cases, 22.9% of respondents rated the collaboration as very effective, and 30.0% considered it effective. While this indicates a positive level of collaboration, 17.2% of respondents remained neutral, and 12.5% felt the collaboration was poor.

7. Discussion of Findings

The following discussions were made based on the analysis which is presented in this study. Regarding CSA prevalence, 66.8% of respondents were aware of CSA cases, indicating significant awareness in the community. However, 33.2% were unaware, suggesting that efforts to raise awareness have not reached everyone. This highlights the need for targeted education and awareness campaigns. These findings align with Ojo and Osemeobo (2021)

assertion that community education is crucial in combating CSA.

The study also examined common locations for CSA, with the home identified by 49.0% of respondents as the primary site, followed by schools (25.8%) and religious institutions (12.8%). This emphasizes the need for stronger child protection measures at home, where CSA is most prevalent, as well as policies in schools and religious institutions. This supports Afolabi’s (2019) assertion on the importance of safe environments for children both at home and in public spaces.

In exploring contributing factors, poverty (44.4%) was identified as the leading cause of CSA, followed by lack of parental supervision (35.9%). These findings are consistent with existing research showing that economic hardship and insufficient parental supervision increase children's vulnerability to abuse (Ezeh & Onyemere, 2020). Poverty often leads to neglect, making children more susceptible to CSA. The lack of parental supervision also underscores the need for greater parental involvement in child safety. Additionally, cultural taboos (13.3%) were cited as a contributing factor, highlighting the impact of societal norms that hinder discussions about CSA.

The findings on the effectiveness of social work interventions align with existing research that highlights the role of social workers in supporting CSA victims. In this study, 48.5% of respondents rated social workers as very effective in counseling victims, with 28.3% finding their services effective. This supports Wright et al. (2020), who noted that social workers are vital in offering counseling and

emotional support, aiding recovery. Similarly, Bailey et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of social workers in providing therapeutic services to CSA survivors.

Regarding CSA awareness, 38.1% of respondents rated social workers as very effective, and 30.5% as effective, reflecting their key role in raising awareness. This is consistent with Paton and Wilson (2018), who found social workers crucial in educating communities on CSA, contributing to prevention. However, 10.9% were neutral, and 4.9% felt the efforts were ineffective, indicating room for improvement, particularly in outreach strategies. Kershaw (2020) also suggested the need for more culturally sensitive awareness campaigns.

On collaboration, 22.9% rated social workers' collaboration as very effective, and 30.0% as effective. However, 17.2% were neutral, and 12.5% found collaboration poor, pointing to the need for improvement. This aligns with Jones and Carter (2021), who emphasized the importance of effective collaboration among social workers, law enforcement, and health professionals.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study reveals that while there is significant awareness of child sexual abuse (CSA) in Uselu Community, there remain considerable gaps in public knowledge and reporting mechanisms. The findings highlight that CSA is highly prevalent within homes, emphasizing the critical need for targeted family-based interventions. Additionally, schools and religious institutions require strengthened child protection policies to safeguard children effectively. The study also identifies poverty and inadequate parental supervision as major risk factors contributing to CSA, underscoring the importance of economic empowerment programs and comprehensive parenting education to mitigate these challenges.

To enhance social work interventions in addressing CSA in Uselu Community, it is recommended that counseling services be improved to provide comprehensive support for survivors and their families. Strengthening collaboration between social workers and law enforcement agencies is crucial to ensure timely intervention and justice for victims. Additionally, there is a need for increased resource allocation to support prevention and response initiatives effectively. Expanding community education programs and engaging key stakeholders, including parents, educators, and religious leaders, will further reinforce efforts to combat CSA and create a safer environment for children.

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